

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

NEA-10 IO-13 FAA-00 CAB-09 SY-10 USSS-00 EB-11 COME-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 SCS-03 SCA-01 RSR-01 /153 W

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R 281449Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7071

INFO AMCONSUL ZAGREB

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BELGRADE 3843

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, YO

SUBJ: ATTEMPTED HIJACKING IN SLOVENIA

REF : BELGRADE 3784; 3759

1. CONSELOR IN FEDERAL SECRETARIAT FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS
'JELOVAC) PROVIDED EMBOFF AUGUST 27 ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION ON PLOT TO HIJACK AN AIRPLANE IN SLOVENIA.

2. JELOVAC DESCRIBED THREE WOULD-BE HIJACKERS AS AMATEURS
AND THRILL-SEEKERS WHOSE PLAN WAS SO VAGUE THEY DID NOT EVEN
HAVE SPECIFIC AIRPLANE OR AIRLINE IN MIND, NOR DID THEY KNOW
SCHEDULE OF ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES AT LJUBLJANA AIRPORT.
RANSOM FIGURE OF \$1 MILLION TERMED PRODUCT OF CHILDISH
FANTASY, PULLED OUT OF AIR. JELOVAC SAID YOUNG MEN TAKEN
INTO CUSTODY AFTER QUESTIONS THEY ASKED PEOPLE ON STREET IN
VILLAGE NEAR AIRPORT ABOUT PLANE SCHEDULES AROUSED SUSPICION.
THEY REPORTEDLY CONFESSED ALMOST AT ONCE TO MILITIAMEN WHO
MADE ARRESTS.

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3. JELOVAC STATED FLATLY THAT THREE MEN HAD NO CONNECTIONS WITH

GROUPS EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE YUGOSLAVIA AND THERE WAS NO POLITICAL MOTIVE IN SCHEME. IN ADDITION TO THREE ARRESTED, TWO OTHER PERSONS KNEW OF PLAN BUT WERE NOT PARTICIPANTS.

4. DC-10, WHICH WAS READYING FOR DEPARTURE WITH GROUP YUGOSLAV-AMERICANS AT TIME OF ARRESTS, WAS NOT INTENDED TARGET OF PLOTTERS. SAID JELOVAC, SINCE THEIR PLAN DID NOT SPECIFY PARTICULAR PLANE. NOR COULD IT HAVE BEEN TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY SINCE THEY WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY IN VILLAGE APPROXIMATELY 8 KM FROM AIRPORT AND THUS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN POSITION IN TIME TO LAUNCH ATTACK ON DC-10 BEFORE IT GOT UNDERWAY.

5. THREE MEN WILL BE FORMALLY CHARGED, PROBABLY WITH ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF WEAPONS AND CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT CRIME, AND BROUGHT TO TRIAL. JELOVAC ESTIMATED THEY WOULD PROBABLY RECEIVE ONE-TWO YEAR PRISON SENTENCES, IF CONVICTED, INDICATING THAT YOUTH AND AMATEURISHNESS WOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION.

6. COMMENT: JELOVAC'S VERSION STRIKES US AS A LITTLE TOO PAT. IT VARIES WITH NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF INCIDENT (E.G. ACCORDING PRESS, TWO OF MEN ARRESTED AT AIRPORT AS DC-10 WAS LOADING AND THIRD CAUGHT IN FOREST NEARBY; FURTHERMORE, SLOVENIAN INTERIOR OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY STATED DC-10 WAS, IN FACT, INTENDED TARGET). EFFORT PORTARY CONSPIRATORS AS IMMATURE SWASHBUCKLERS WHO "JUST PLAYING A GAME, ALTHOUGH A DANGEROUS ONE" AT VARIANCE ALSO WITH NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS WHICH STATED MEN HAD AUTOMATIC WEAPONS (JELOVAC CONFIRMED ONLY THAT WEAPONS OBTAINED FROM BURGLARY OF WAREHOUSE) AND THAT SHOTS WERE FIRED AT TIME ARRESTS MADE.
JOHNSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIRCRAFT HIJACKING, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BELGRA03843
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BELGRADE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730812/aaaaaia.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BELGRADE 3784; 3759
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <11-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ATTEMPTED HIJACKING IN SLOVENIA
TAGS: ETRN, YO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005